



# Environmental Funders Network

STRATEGY 2023-2026

*Guided by Nature*





## Foreword

We are rapidly reaching the middle of a critical decade for steering humanity onto a different track, a time when the diversity of life on Earth is imperilled, and climate change threatens to breach key tipping points. We urgently need those working to foster a thriving world to succeed; we see our role at the Environmental Funders Network as helping to create the conditions for them to do so.

We chose to focus our new strategy on the period 2023-2026, knowing that at the end of that period we would want to pause to take stock and, if necessary, re-strategise as the decade speeds towards its close.

In this document, we lay out that strategy, which builds from a set of principles on which we will base our work. All of our work priorities that follow are rooted in these principles, and we will use them to guide our decisions as the strategy period unfolds.

To develop these principles and our priorities for the coming year, we reflected on when EFN has been most successful to date and why, using feedback from our members and others. With our board, staff and advisors, we also reflected on the evolving external context for our work and what it demands of us. That process helped illuminate where we add the most value to the system of actors working to address environmental crises, and which specific aspects of our work we consider to be most needed over the next four years. These priorities are reflected in the pages that follow, divided by our three work pillars:

- 1 Expanding environmental philanthropy**
- 2 Improving the effectiveness of environmental funding**
- 3 Supporting those that do environmental work to be more effective**

Every year, for the duration of the strategy period, we will reflect anew on the external context for our work and revise our priorities accordingly. The broader framework of our mission, vision and principles will remain the same.

If you have ideas for how we could work together, please get in touch at [info@greenfunders.org](mailto:info@greenfunders.org).

**Florence Miller**, *Director*

**Catherine Bryan**, *Chair of Trustees*

JANUARY 2023



## OUR STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

### OUR MISSION

We aim to increase the levels of philanthropic support for environmental causes and to improve its overall effectiveness.

### OUR VISION

A world where people and planet thrive.

### OUR AMBITION

We will drive a step-change in the levels and effectiveness of environmental philanthropy from UK sources, creating the conditions needed for those who are working to foster a thriving world to succeed.

As a result of our work, there will be higher levels of funding for the environment, and philanthropic funding for environmental causes will be maximally effective.

### WHO WE ARE

- We are a network of, and for, funders and advisors with an interest in the environment, supporting the whole philanthropic ecosystem, from individual donors and private foundations to intermediaries, pooled funds, and philanthropy and wealth advisors
- We also support those working on and fundraising for environmental issues
- We create connections between people funding or working on environmental issues, and bolster their agency, ambition and effectiveness
- We are UK-based, with a UK and international outlook

### HOW WE WORK

We have three pillars to our strategy, aligned with our mission:

- Expanding environmental philanthropy: encouraging new donors to support environmental causes, and established donors to increase their giving
- Improving the effectiveness of environmental funding
- Supporting those that do environmental work to be more effective

### OUR PRINCIPLES

Our principles guide our work, underpinning how we make decisions. We are:

- **GUIDED BY NATURE:** In thinking about how to support effective environmental work and funding, we take our lead from natural ecosystems, where diversity, connectivity and the efficient flow of resources are crucial to good health.
- **FUTURE FOCUSED AND URGENT:** We focus on what must be done now, knowing that measures taken today to conserve and restore the living world will be significantly more potent than those taken when we are further along our current trajectories.
- **IMPACT-ORIENTATED:** Everything we do is focused on our mission of increasing the levels and efficacy of philanthropy for environmental causes.
- **ACCESSIBLE:** We are open to funders at all stages of their funding journey and keep the barriers to entry to EFN as low as possible.
- **COMMITTED TO PLURALITY:** We recognise that social change requires a range of different approaches that, combined, can lead to impact, and we enable the sector to embrace plurality.
- **COLLABORATIVE:** We embrace the power of collaboration to allow individual groups to become more than the sum of their parts. We collaborate strategically ourselves to achieve more than we could alone.
- **EVIDENCE-LED:** We use research and learning – ours and others' – to underpin, evolve and guide our work.
- **SYSTEMIC:** We recognise that there are key systemic issues that give rise to environmental harms, including issues of justice and power, such as racism and wealth inequality, and we shine a light on potential solutions through our programmes.
- **AMPLIFYING:** We believe that those particularly affected by environmental issues are well placed to identify solutions, and we use EFN's platform to help amplify their voices.
- **MODELLING THE CHANGE:** In our team and within our networks, we seek to create a microcosm of the structures and processes we think would make the world a better place, taking into account equitable power dynamics, a relationships-based approach, kindness and care.



## APPROACHES

We use several approaches within each pillar of our work:

- Research to understand patterns of grantmaking, gaps, and the priorities and needs of the sector
- Convening to create, build and strengthen relationships between funders, between environmental groups, and between funders and environmental groups

- Publications and other products to inform, inspire and motivate funders and the wider sector
- Informational talks, workshops, field trips and retreats to input from a range of experts and practitioners

We aim to provide leadership in our programming and push boundaries, where we feel necessary, guided by our principles.

## OUTCOMES

Our theory of change outlines the outcomes we are aiming for, and the mechanisms of change we think will help. The high level theory of change is described below, and you can read about the specific outcomes we are aiming for for each of

our audience groups (funders, philanthropy and wealth advisors, environmental fundraisers, and those working directly on environmental issues beyond fundraisers) in the [full document](#).

### EFN empowers funders, advisors and eNGOs

#### Increased awareness, skills, knowledge and networks

Fundraisers feel sense of agency

eNGOs feel sense of agency

Funders feel sense of agency

Advisors feel sense of agency

Improved effectiveness of environmental fundraising

Improved effectiveness of eNGOs

Improved effectiveness of environmental philanthropy

Funders and wealth advisors feeling inspired to act

Increased philanthropic funds for environmental issues

#### ACCOUNTABILITY LINE

#### Improved resourcing and effectiveness of the environmental sector

Collective responsibility across all sectors and communities to stop the damage and support the repair of the natural world

### A WORLD THAT IS ECOLOGICALLY DIVERSE AND SUSTAINABLE

## 2023 Work Priorities and Context

Within our strategic framework, each year we consider the changing external context for our work, the needs of funders and the sector, and the most pressing themes that we feel ought to be addressed as priorities. We have adopted this iterative and adaptable approach to strategy to enable us to respond to evolving needs.

We recognise that the need for effective and well-resourced environmental actors is greater than ever. Though in many arenas the tide is finally turning, governments and corporations continue to adopt policies and take actions that worsen climate change and the nature crisis; culture and society bear responsibility, too. Where action is taken, it is often at insufficient speed and scale. Yet measures taken today to conserve and restore the living world and to reduce climate change will be significantly more potent than measures taken after several more years of travel along our current trajectories.

Consequently, the need for impactful environmental work is great and the urgency is high.

We believe that the capacity of environmental actors to succeed is in large part a function of how well resourced they are, and how much they function like a healthy ecosystem: diverse, well-connected and resilient.

Philanthropic funding from UK sources for environmental causes is on the rise, but environmental initiatives still find it hard to secure funding. There are now a number of organisations working to significantly grow environmental funding (for example,

Impatience Earth, Climate Leadership Initiative, Active Philanthropy). EFN occupies a unique and complementary space in this ecosystem: our networks of experienced environmental funders, NGOs and the wider philanthropy sector allow us to offer particular support and resources to new donors that draw on a wealth of knowledge.

All of this adds up to the need for EFN to continue working on its three overarching pillars: **(1) expanding environmental philanthropy** (encouraging new donors to support environmental causes and established donors to increase their giving); **(2) improving the effectiveness of environmental funding**; and **(3) supporting those that do environmental work to be more effective.**





**PILLAR 1: Expanding environmental philanthropy: encouraging new donors to support environmental causes, and established donors to increase their giving**

**Context:**

We are delighted that more and more funders are starting to focus on the environment and levels of funding are rising<sup>1</sup>. We see an increasing need to support funders who are new to the space with the **inspiration, resources and community to get giving quickly and at scale**, therefore bringing more funding into the sector.

Levels of funding for environmental work from UK philanthropic sources have grown substantially in the last several years, at least doubling between 2016 and 2019, and they continue to rise. Our efforts, alongside those of others working in this area of work, are paying off! We think it is important that

we continue to highlight the **urgent need for more environmental funding from private philanthropy**, because it is uniquely placed to support work other kinds of funders won't, and can also act as a catalyst to unlock larger amounts of funding from other sources.

The deep connections between environmental issues and other charitable causes are increasingly understood. We see a growing opportunity to **support donors who haven't traditionally funded environmental causes to increase their knowledge of these connections**, and fund work that benefits their traditional focus areas as well as the environment.



1 Where the Green Grants Went 8 (<https://www.greenfunders.org/where-the-green-grants-went-8/>)

**In 2023, we will:**

**CONTINUE**

- Organise online events to engage with specific audiences and support them to start to give, or give more to environmental causes e.g. meetings for new environmental donors; a cost of living/health event aimed at social and health funders.
- Raise the profile of environmental philanthropy and extend our networks through participation on Advisory Boards for the Beacon Collaborative, Funder Commitment on Climate Change, and NPC's Everyone's Environment programme.
- Offer bespoke advice to donors who are new to the environment, working with other philanthropy advice organisations like Impatience Earth, Climate Leadership Initiative and Active Philanthropy as appropriate.
- Work with EFN's new Scotland Advisory Group to network and galvanise more funders (and their professional advisers) to support environmental work in Scotland and beyond.
- Deliver the second year of the learning programme associated with the Environmental Finance and Learning Fund, in partnership with the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation.

**GROW**

- Provide more guidance, via events and resources, to new environmental funders and philanthropy advisors, based on feedback from funders/advisors and analysis of the resources currently available.
- Develop a series of online and in person events to engage arts funders with environmental causes, building on interest in how the arts, culture and entertainment can inspire individuals to take action on the climate and nature crisis.
- Build back an in-person event programme, including events to connect with specific audiences (e.g. an event for hedge fund managers; events looking at the intersections with other causes), and project visits. Specifically target the wealthiest families in the UK by organising an environmental philanthropy summit.

**START**

- Develop a programme to engage with family offices in the UK to support them to give more to environmental causes, following recommendations from EFN-commissioned research.
- Explore the option for a media campaign, to highlight the value of environmental philanthropy and the need for much more of it.
- Launch a pilot Environmental Impact Investment Group to help network and support funders looking to make green impact investments, growing the funding for early stage and other green ventures in need of investment.
- Develop a programme for engaging with trustees and individual philanthropists e.g. meetings to help trustees/funders influence their boards/family members such as a [Boardroom 2030](#) initiative specifically for foundation boards.



## PILLAR 2: Improving the effectiveness of environmental funding

### Context:

Even as funding levels grow, our research<sup>2</sup> and that of others indicates that certain issues continue to receive much less support than they need, including some of the systemic drivers of environmental issues (for example, trade policy, finance flows, the way the economy functions, and a culture characterised by consumerism and disconnection from the rest of nature). In addition, some approaches to change have demonstrated their outsized impact recently but continue to be hard to fundraise for (e.g., movement building and activism, or the coordination of effective networks); likewise policy and advocacy work is deemed by environmental groups to be

vital but hard to fund<sup>3</sup>.

EFN has a role to play in **helping funders to learn about how**

### to support these 'Cinderella' issues and approaches.

In 2023, we anticipate that levels of interest in the **value of nature** will rise following the outcomes of the UN Biodiversity Conference that took place in December 2022 (CBD COP15), and that nature will become more central in climate dialogues. We support the mandate within the Global Biodiversity Framework adopted at CBD COP15 to halt and reverse nature loss by 2030, and we see a need to support funders in understanding the **deep connections between nature and climate objectives**, and to ensure these issues aren't considered and addressed in isolation.

We take on board feedback and suggestions from funders and the wider NGO sector regularly, through formal surveys and informal conversations. We know from this feedback that EFN has some **key business-as-usual offerings** that are valuable and effective and should be continued, such as our regular funder events, our monthly newsletter, the Rapid Response Fund and our research reports. These will continue to be priorities in 2023. We have also listened to feedback demonstrating a desire to meet up more in person and will be offering more in-person events again, alongside our virtual offerings.



<sup>2</sup> Where the Green Grants Went 8, 2021 (<https://www.greenfunders.org/where-the-green-grants-went-8/>); Youth Climate Justice Study, 2022 (<https://youthclimatejusticestudy.org/>); Environmental Funding by European Foundations Volume 5, 2021 (<https://philea.issuelab.org/resource/environmental-funding-by-european-foundations-volume-5.html>)

<sup>3</sup> What the Green Groups Said 2021: <https://www.greenfunders.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/What-the-Green-Groups-Said-2021-online.pdf>

## In 2023, we will:

### CONTINUE

- Organise our regular roster of events for funders to meet and network with one another, learn from each other, and hear from experts on a broad range of environmental issues. These events will be a mixture of in-person events (quarterly lunches, our annual retreat, field trips, and other *ad hoc* meetings) and virtual ones. At least four events will focus on topics of particular relevance to Scotland.
- Focus on the 'Cinderella' issues and approaches in our programming (see [Where the Green Grants Went](#) for a description), to help funders to better understand and support these where appropriate.
- Disseminate the findings of our [What the Green Groups Said](#) research to funders to ensure they understand the needs of those doing environmental work.
- Highlight elements of good practice grantmaking, as described in our [Theory of Change](#), through blog posts and events bringing funders and grantees together to talk about what good practice grantmaking is and explore case studies demonstrating how it can boost impact.
- Encourage foundations to submit their organisational racial diversity data to the [RACE Report](#) and to motivate their grantees to do the same.

### GROW

- Equip funders with a better understanding of models of how social change happens, to inform their philanthropic decisions.
- Increase the number of opportunities for funders to hear a broad diversity of perspectives, in particular from racialised communities and from those most affected by environmental issues, in the UK and internationally.
- Increase the focus on intersections between social and environmental issues in our programming, with a particular focus on racial justice.
- Increase the focus on interconnections between nature and climate in our programming, with a particular focus on forest conservation.
- Facilitate sharing of knowledge and expertise between EFN members and with other UK/Scotland-based funder networks.

### START

- Launch a pilot directory of funders participating in EFN with public- and funder-facing information, with at least 40 funders participating. The goal is to support members to better understand who is doing what, improving coordination and collaboration, and to make sources of philanthropic funding for environmental work more visible and accessible to the sector.
- Launch the first Philanthropy Lab as a space for funders to raise their ambition together, address issues systemically and practise more effective forms of giving to the environment.

# PILLAR 3: Supporting those that do environmental work to be more effective

## Context:

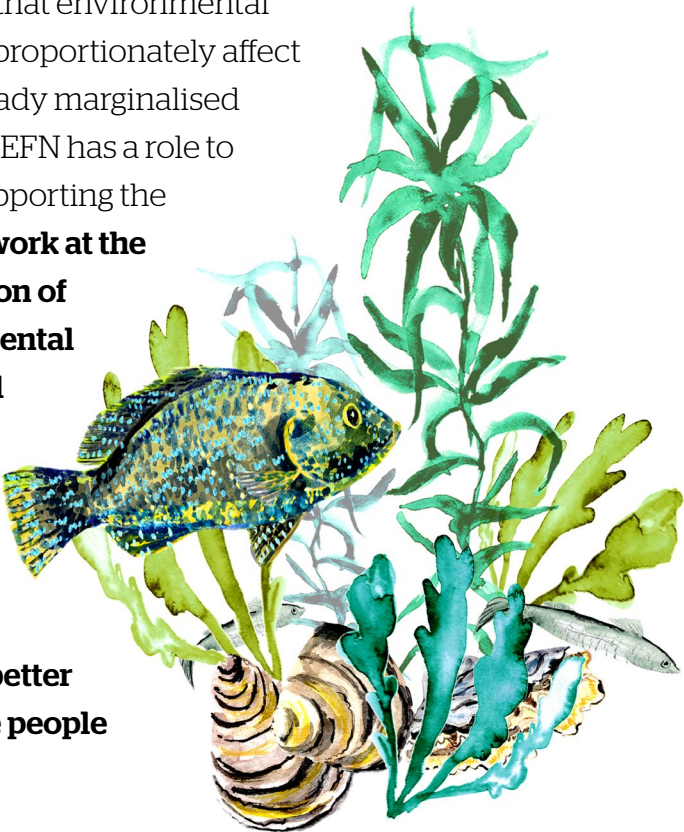
There continues to be a lack of transparency and clarity around what funding is available to support environmental solutions. At a time when, more than ever, we need a well-oiled, hyper-effective system of actors working on environmental solutions, groups expend a significant amount of time and resources trying to find out who offers funds, let alone applying for and reporting on those funds. Initiatives like 360Giving have started to lend transparency to the system; we see our role as supporting and signposting to such schemes, but also **providing funders with encouragement and the means to be more accessible**, such as a publicly available online directory of our members. We also see a need to bring those working directly on environmental issues together with funders to openly discuss challenges and ways to improve the flow of resources.

As environmental funding increases, so too does the number of initiatives active on environmental issues, increasing the chances of duplication, or lack of coordination. We see an opportunity to **map out and support a better-functioning ecosystem**.

In addition, many green fundraisers and communicators are working in silos - experiencing the same challenges as others but without a mechanism for sharing experiences and insights, or receiving any investment in their professional

development. High turnover rates and burnout are also anecdotally common issues across the sector, with staff well-being a major challenge as individuals frequently reckon with eco-anxiety combined with heavy work loads. We see the need to provide **spaces for eNGOs to learn, network and share experiences**, and to **strengthen the wellbeing of those working on environmental issues**.

Research in 2021 revealed that the UK environment sector has failed to act on its ambitions to become more inclusive, and that this is reflected in abnormally low levels of diversity amongst its staff and boards.<sup>4</sup> There is an abundance of evidence that environmental issues disproportionately affect those already marginalised in society. EFN has a role to play in supporting the sector to **work at the intersection of environmental and social justice issues**, and to help the sector's efforts to **better reflect the people it serves**.



4 'Changing the World From Within', Full Colour (commissioned by Wildlife and Countryside Link), 2021. [https://www.wcl.org.uk/docs/WCL\\_Changing\\_the\\_world\\_from\\_within\\_October\\_2022.pdf](https://www.wcl.org.uk/docs/WCL_Changing_the_world_from_within_October_2022.pdf)

## In 2023, we will:

### CONTINUE

- Facilitate the Rapid Response Fund, the 'EFN Live' fundraising event with The Funding Network, and the Big Give Green Match Fund.
- Re-launch the next phase of the Regen Narratives Community (formerly Reset Narratives Community), with a focus on supporting climate, nature, social justice and new economy narratives. The community supports compelling and potent narratives, ensuring effective messages are echoed across sectors and learnings are shared widely to spur us towards a fairer, greener economy.
- Provide bespoke advice to Scottish eNGOs (especially those that are less well resourced) and actively participate in networks including the Scottish Environmental Fundraisers Forum.

### GROW

- Develop the three strategic projects proposed to us by the sector in our 2022 convenings:
  - 1/ Engage and support wealth and philanthropy advisors around green philanthropy
  - 2/ Support (with partners) a large-scale media appeal to increase public awareness and funding for the environment sector
  - 3/ Support initiatives to map the sector to better understand and visualise the complex ecosystem for the benefit of both funders and environmental groups.
- Facilitate spaces and communication channels for the sector to become better connected and more collaborative - e.g. a training series, talks, meetings, symposiums, a Slack channel, monthly newsletters etc.

### START

- Deliver the pilot Climate Activist Speaker Fund to support a cohort of up to 15 youth climate activists from communities and areas most affected by climate change, testing a new mechanism of philanthropic support for activists to deliver effective messaging. The pooled fund will support young activists to undergo training and upskilling to communicate their message across diverse audiences, provide compensation for their speaking engagements and associated costs, and support activist safety and well-being.
- Encourage NGOs in our networks to submit their organisational racial diversity data to the [RACE Report](#).
- Support the development of a climate-confident third sector in Scotland (working with SCVO, other infrastructure bodies and funders) and across the UK (working with NPC on the Everyone's Environment programme).
- Support the development of the Sustainability Wellness Environment Network to ensure a healthy, resilient, effective environment sector.